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ABSTRACT

Topics suggested by 101 elementary school teachers in Illinois, intended for teachers of writing in the elementary grades (also adaptable for junior and senior high school classes), are divided into the following categories: (1) Description (e.g., Me, My World, My Dreams); (2) Characterization (e.g., Personal, Plant and Animal); (3) Dramatization (e.g., Playwriting, Character Portrayal); (4) Narration (e.g., Stories, Special Days); (5) Imaginative Writing (e.g., Other Places, Anything Goes, Words as Ideas); (6) Reporting (e.g., Lead Questions, Human Interest); and (70 Miscellaneous (e.g., Puzzles). Motivational techniques (e.g., using literature, games, props, discussion, and media) and a "writing tables" which suggests activities to encourage imaginative development also offer suggestions for student writing. (MF)

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A Thousand Topics for Composition: Revised

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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One hundred one elementary teachers in Illinois responded to a request made for topics which might prove useful to a teacher of writing in the elementary grades. Lists from schools, large and small, and from all sections of the state were received and processed by Walter J. Moore and two of his graduate students, Eric and Marcia Kimmel.

The eight categories, each of which is subdivided, are arbitrary groupings into which the topics were placed for easy reference. Sometimes topics may appear in more than one category.

Junior and senior high school teachers will find many topics suitable for their classes. Likewise, elementary teachers will find many topics listed in "One Thousand Topics for Composition: Revised," a listing especially designed for junior and senior high schools (*Illinois English Bulletin,* January, 1971) adaptable for elementary classes.

All of the topics in both *Bulletin*s are suggested as a stockpile of ideas which a teacher can adapt to his own situation. As was stated, however, in the introduction to the January *Bulletin,*

(Prepared under the direction of a Special Projects Committee for Theme Topic Evaluation—Kenneth Ettner, Elgin High School, Chairman; and Paul Jacobs, Chairman, Special Projects Committee, Illinois Association of Teachers of English.)

"Ideally, the best topics are usually those which have grown out of classroom discussions."

DESCRIPTION

Me

1. My favorite movie (book, holiday, TV program, comic book, food) is . . . because . . . .
2. Why I am thankful.
3. Why I like or do not like school.
4. Ten things in the world I would change.
5. Things I don't like (in list form).
6. A funny dream.
7. These are a few of my favorite things.
8. The things I love to touch.
9. How I feel in the dark.
10. When I was little.
11. Describe your personality.
12. How my family celebrates (holiday).
13. What makes me happy when I'm sick.
14. I am sad because . . . .
15. I am happy because . . . .
16. A sport I like (fishing, baseball, kickball, etc.).
17. A present I would like.
18. I like (second) grade because . . . .
19. In the (third) grade, I am going to . . . .
20. My biggest worry.
21. I would like to own . . . .
22. A (sixth) grader is . . . .
23. The thing I treasure most.
24. When school is out I will . . . .
25. When I go out in the winter, I have to wear . . . .
26. The feeling in the pit of my stomach when I'm going to be punished.

My World

1. A bumblebee.
2. A cloud.
3. A dream.
4. The fan.
5. The farm.
6. The flag.
7. A good book.
8. A hot day in summer.
9. I saw it.
10. A mosquito.
11. On my street.
12. Our school is . . . .
13. The prune.
14. The raisin.

15. Soft poached eggs.
16. Sleet is . . . .
17. Slush is . . . .
18. Snow is . . . .
19. A snowy winter day.
20. Some signs of fall are . . . .
21. Spring reminds me of . . . .
22. The stars.
23. The sun.
24. A TV set.
25. A train whistle.
26. Wading in a puddle is . . . .
27. People I can do without.
28. What I saw on the way home from school yesterday.
29. A place I would like to visit.
30. A cool swim on a hot day.
31. A crisp day in fall.
32. A sunny day in spring.
33. A straight pin.
34. The Beatles' music.
35. A windy day.
36. A cold day.
37. A clock.
38. A hot day.
39. Christmas morning.
40. A rugged mountain range.
41. Our flag.
42. The bird table.
43. The sound of . . . .
44. The taste of . . . .
45. The perfect place to live.
46. The exact color of a lake.
47. The new leaves.
48. The song of the robin.
49. The song of the wind that howls around the corner at night.
50. My block (neighborhood).
51. An exciting game.
52. A dachshund.
53. A place I have visited.
54. A walk through the forest.
55. Walking in the rain.
56. It's morning again.
57. It's winter and the earth is bare.
58. A (cocker spaniel) puppy.
59. A Jello salad.
60. A dog's long ears.
61. A kitten's soft purr.
62. A calf's pink tongue.
63. The woods in winter.
64. In the rain I can . . . .
65. The feel of velvet.
66. It was shiny and bright.

67. Little lost bunny.
68. A traditional Christmas.
69. In spring, the animals (weather) . . . .
70. My favorite commercial is . . . .
71. The moon (sun, stars) reminds me of . . . .
72. The house I live in (or would like to live in).
73. An object in the room.
74. A person in action.
75. Roast turkey on Thanksgiving.
76. When I plant a seed, here is what happens.
77. The first snow fell last night. People's yards look like . . . .

My Thoughts

1. What is quiet?
2. What is peace?
3. What is happiness?
4. What makes me cry.
5. What I like to do.
6. What I could do with a board.
7. What I could do with a yard of percale.
8. What Christmas means to me.
9. What I like about school.
10. The happiest day of my life.
11. A dream I had.
12. The funniest thing I ever saw.
13. Things I can't see or touch.
14. The spookiest thing I ever saw (real or imaginary).
15. Babies can't talk because . . . .
16. What . . . means to me (fill in the blank with a color).
17. My favorite fairy tale is . . . because . . . .
18. My favorite day of the week is . . . because . . . .
19. The American flag means . . . to me.
20. To me, spring means . . . .
21. The things I fear.
22. When I am alone, I like to . . . .
23. Sometimes I wonder about . . . .
24. A friend is . . . .
25. The place I would most like to explore.
26. When it is dark, I like to think of . . . .
27. My favorite color is . . . because . . . .
28. I like to rake leaves because . . . .
29. In spring, I feel like . . . .
30. I wonder why . . . .
31. I remember.
32. I think.
33. I suppose.
34. Changing maple leaves.

My Dreams

1. A strange dream.
2. If I had a penny . . . .

3. I would be a . . . because . . . .
4. Clouds remind me of . . . .
5. I'm going to ask Santa for . . . .
6. On Christmas Eve Santa will . . . .
7. Where I would like to be right now.
8. If I had a (dime) I would buy . . . .
9. Traveling West as a pioneer.
10. What will you be doing in November 1979?
11. If things could talk, I think they would say . . . .
12. Describe a child's day one hundred years from today.

My Ideas

1. Excitement is . . . .
2. War means . . . .
3. Love is . . . .
4. A good teacher is . . . .
5. Being (seven) means . . . .
6. Vacation fun is . . . .
7. Summer is . . . .
8. Snow prints are . . . .
9. What a mother is.
10. How does it feel to be disappointed?
11. A hippie is . . . .
12. Christmas time is special because . . . .
13. Leaves fall off the trees because . . . .
14. Leaves turn colors because . . . .
15. A clown looks like . . . .
16. To hibernate means . . . .
17. Loneliness is . . . .
18. To succeed is to . . . .
19. It's smaller than a breadbox.
20. The traffic light that never changed.
21. If I could invent something to make work easier, I would invent . . . .
22. If I could invent something to make life more fun, I would invent . . . .
23. If I could change my block (neighborhood), I would . . . .
24. If I had a big empty box, I would make . . . .
25. The experience I most want to remember (or forget).
26. Write a story describing a new toy you have invented to amuse children under ten years of age.

My Actions

1. What I like to do best on the playground.
2. The method of travel that I enjoy most.
3. If I had a special present, here's how I would decorate the box.
4. If I were snowed in, I would . . . .
5. The presents I am going to buy for my family are . . . .
6. When I am sick in bed I . . . .
7. If I could do whatever I wanted to in school, I would . . . .

8. If I could go to any country to live, I would go . . . .
9. If I found a hurt animal, I would . . . .
10. If I were to receive an award and was later told I would not get it, I would feel . . . and would . . . .

CHARACTERIZATION

Personal

1. When I am 10 (11, 12, 13) years old.
2. If I were teacher I would . . . .
3. If I were president . . . .
4. If I were principal . . . .
5. What I want to be when I grow up.
6. If I could make one phone call, I would call . . . because . . . and say . . . .
7. I get angry when . . . .
8. I often wonder (worry) about . . . .
9. I would like to give a poor child . . . on Christmas because . . . .
10. What I like about me . . . .
11. If were a . . . .
12. When I was younger.
13. What I am really like.
14. How I see myself.
15. The real me.

Others (Human)

1. I admire . . . (name of person).
2. The one I love most.
3. My favorite aunt (uncle).
4. My favorite kind of person.
5. What I admire most in a boy (girl) friend.
6. My favorite cousin.
7. My best friend.
8. A beautiful person.
9. He made me laugh.
10. The famous person I would most like to be.
11. The unknown person I would most like to be.
12. The most unusual person I know.
13. My first friend.
14. My kind of family.
15. My family.

Others (Plant and Animal)

1. I think trees in the winter feel . . . .
2. Consider the mighty ant.
3. My pet.
4. My favorite animal.
5. How a tree feels on a cold night.
6. I'm a lazy kitten.
7. A tale about a big fish.

DRAMATIZATION

"Proverbial" Plays

1. Speech is silver, silence is golden.
2. A penny saved is a penny earned.
3. The early bird gets the worm.
4. What makes a hippie a hippie (to be performed).

Playwriting

1. Write a play of some incident in history.
2. Write a highly adventurous story using members of the class as the characters.
3. Pretend you are living in the Plymouth Colony and write a letter to your best friend in London.
4. Write a script for a school program.

Character Portrayal

1. Gulliver the Great, an episode.
2. Paul Bunyan at the city park.
3. Sailing the seas with Christopher Columbus.
4. The night Lincoln died.

NARRATION

Stories

1. Each minute seemed like an hour.
2. Playing the game.
3. The trial.
4. Caught in the act.
5. At last the day was over (one sentence of story; build theme from there).
6. The discovery of bubble gum.
7. Dear John.
8. The accidental wonder.
9. Fractured fairy tales.
10. And then it happened.
11. There were strange footprints in the sand.
12. A funny story.
13. Late for school.
14. Lost in a wilderness.
15. There is only one way to do something — that is . . . .
16. What would happen if . . . .
17. When it starts to get cold, animals . . . .
18. Winter animals are . . . .
19. She returned to the empty room but something had moved.
20. A baby chick can . . . .
21. Let's go fly a kite and . . . .

Special Days

1. The happiest day in my life.
2. My most exciting day.
3. My favorite day.
4. My most memorable day.
5. My nicest birthday party.
6. My birthday wish.
7. A holiday story.
8. A Halloween surprise.
9. On Saturday, I . . . .
10. How my family spent the Fourth of July.
11. The year Santa was lazy.
12. On Christmas Eve, I'll feel . . . .
13. On Christmas morning, I . . . .

Personal

1. I wonder why . . . .
2. A million in one and I had to . . . .
3. I was so afraid when . . . .
4. I found a . . . .
5. I wish that . . . .
6. I slowly lifted the lid and . . . .
7. When I am bigger than my dad, I will be glad because . . . .
8. When it is the last day of school, I will be . . . .
9. Why I enjoy . . . .
10. I remember how scared I was when . . . .
11. When I have been naughty, I feel . . . .
12. I was almost frightened to death once when . . . .
13. When I rake leaves I . . . .
14. I floated on a cloud and . . . .
15. So I said to my mother . . . .
16. I didn't mean to do it.
17. We did it together.
18. How can I explain what I've done?
19. Why did it have to be me?
20. The day I walked on stilts.
21. Someone made fun of me.
22. My dog is lost.
23. If I could be part of my favorite TV show.
24. If I had a day off from school, I would . . . .
25. The step outside my door.
26. One day I went downtown. On the way I found a fifty-cent piece.
27. What I think about before I fall asleep.
28. My most exciting time.
29. My first haircut.
30. My first report card.
31. My autobiography.
32. Something I remember from the time when I was little (an incident which is representative of much of the child's experience).
33. When I broke a rule (trouble at home or school).

34. When I loved me (a proud or very happy time).
35. When I cried boo-hoo (a sad time in life).
36. How I was frightened.
37. My most disappointing moment.
38. It couldn't happen to me — but it did.
39. I was so embarrassed.
40. Was I sick!
41. I was so scared.
42. Once I dreamed . . . .
43. The funniest thing I ever saw.
44. I learned my lesson.
45. I'll never forget this.
46. The best thing that ever happened to me.

IMAGINATIVE WRITING

Other Places

1. One hundred years from now, I would invent . . . .
2. Put yourself back in the times of Lewis and Clark.
3. When I was two.
4. The day I grew six feet.
5. Write a description of your landing on Mars.
6. If I could change the world.
7. What I would (might) find if I went to Mars.
8. Would you like to go to the moon?
9. What do you think they will find on the moon?
10. What do you think it would be like to live on Mars?
11. What I'd take on a trip to the moon.
12. What I can see from a cloud.
13. My home is the moon.
14. What happens when I put on my magic vest?
15. If I had a magic pencil at school.
16. If I could be anyone.
17. If I had a million dollars.
18. An imaginary trip anywhere.
19. If I were only one inch tall, I would . . . .
20. If I could only relive yesterday.
21. If I were living long ago.
22. If I lived in a Christmas tree, I would . . . .
23. If I could live in a different time period, which period would I pick and how would life be different for me?
24. If I could drive a car, I would go . . . .
25. If I could reach the sky, I would . . . .
26. If I could fly.
27. If I became invisible.
28. If I could do what I wanted for one day, I would . . . .
29. If I could have one wish.
30. If I had a reindeer, I would . . . .
31. If I had three wishes.
32. If I had my very own town, I would . . . .

33. If I had a baby d[illegible]n, I would . . . .
34. If I could give any gift in the world, I would . . . .
35. If the moon were mine I would . . . .
36. If I could change the world.
37. If I could, I would . . . .
38. If I were Santa Claus, I would . . . .
39. If I found one hundred dollars, I would . . . .
40. If I had magical powers.
41. If I ran the school.
42. Imagine yourself in never-never land, in Old England, or on the moon. Write about your experience there.
43. What would it be like if you were one of the first families to live on the moon? What is it like living on the moon?
44. What I'd see if I were a cloud. View of any state or country (good research subject).
45. If I were the first girl (boy) on the moon. (Good when the astronauts were landing on the moon. Centered around study of space, astronauts, moon, etc.)
46. If I came from another planet, what would be my first impressions of the earth?
47. If I lived on the moon, what would I say to the first astronauts when they landed?
48. If I were the last person left on this earth, what would I do?
49. If I could be a magician and eliminate one thing, what would it be? Explain.
50. Write a story about being invisible. (Tell the children they are going to take a potion which will make them invisible. They are to tell about where they would go and what they would do.)
51. What would happen if you found a pair of wings — just your size — on the table when you came home from school tonight?

Other People

1. A day in the life of . . . . (The blank is to be filled with the name of a family member or close friend of the Abraham Lincoln family. Assignment follows the annual trip to the Lincoln home.)
2. Write stories of what you think would have happened in history if Lincoln had not gone to the Ford Theater; if Paul Revere's horse had fallen and broken its leg, etc.
3. Can you guess my name?
4. Ben Franklin as I knew him.
5. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. I was there — 1777.
6. I who named the sun.
7. I was born one hundred years ago.
8. (Given the ability) I would change places with . . . for twenty-four hours.
9. Write a story about little people who are no bigger than your thumb.
10. Pretend you are a baby waiting to be born and are floating on a cloud and looking down on earth for a mother to choose. (Assignment for Mother's Day.)

11. The witch who couldn't fly.
12. If I could be . . . for a day.
13. If I could be any character in a book, I'd be . . . .
14. If I could be a famous person, I'd be . . . .
15. If I were a pilgrim child.
16. If I were a cowboy (cowgirl, astronaut, football player).

Other Objects

1. My life as a . . . . (The name of an instrument is supplied by the pupil who seeks to project feeling into an instrument played in the symphony. Assignment follows a trip to an afternoon symphony program.)
2. Pretend to be something that is not exactly alive and write about it (paper, tooth, eyebrow, teakettle, etc.).
3. I am a pumpkin (ghost, witch, cat).
4. I am a pumpkin on a doorstep.
5. I am a pumpkin in a field.
6. I am a tree (bell, gift, star).
7. I am a star on a tree.
8. I am a star in the sky.
9. I am Mickey Mouse.
10. I am a letter of the alphabet.
11. I am a turkey.
12. Why I want to be a lion (any animal).
13. What I'd do if I were a raindrop.
14. My name is Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.
15. My experiences as a lunch bucket.
16. My life as a sink stopper (or other).
17. What animal I would like to be — and why.
18. If I were a kite.
19. The giraffe's one wish.
20. Sam, the lonely shoe.
21. The little bee with no stinger.
22. If . . . (in summer, snow fell; turtles had no shells; a woman were elected President).
23. If textbooks could talk.
24. If I were a large Christmas present.
25. If I were a football, I would . . . .
26. If I were a bird, here is the song I would sing . . . .
27. If I were a flower, I would . . . .
28. If I were a Christmas tree.
29. If I were a mouse.
30. If I were a pet, I'd be . . . .
31. If I were a duck.
32. If I were a goldfish, I would . . . .
33. If I were any animal, I would be a . . . because . . . .
34. If I were a balloon, I would . . . .
35. If I were a pair of glasses, I would see . . . .
36. If I were a cloud in the sky.
37. If I were a purple turtle.
38. If I were a speck of dust, I would . . . .

39. If I were a school desk, I would . . . .
40. If I were a piece of chalk, I would . . . .
41. If I were an eraser, I would . . . .
42. If I were a blackboard, I would . . . .
43. If I were a TV set, I would . . . .
44. If I were a snow tire, I would . . . .
45. If I were a jingle bell, I would . . . .
46. If I were a Christmas dinner, I would have . . . .
47. If I were a Christmas tree, I would . . . .
48. If I could be a toy, I would be a . . . because . . . .
49. If I could be an inanimate object, what would I be? Why?
50. If I were a tube of toothpaste, I would . . . .
51. How I would feel if I were a flagpole (on a sunny day; on a rainy, cold day).
52. How I would feel if I were a piece of chalk (dragon, bulletin board, cardboard box, Christmas tree, star, flower, snowflake, choir).
53. If I were the sun (moon), I would . . . .
54. If I could be an animal, I would like to be a . . . .
55. If I were an ice cream cone.
56. If a door could talk, I'm sure it would say . . . .
57. If I were a raindrop, I would . . . .
58. If I were a butterfly, where I would be right now.

Anything Goes

1. Name and write a story about this Wheezeit! (Any of Dr. Seuss's illustrations are good for this.)
2. The day the teacher turned into a . . . (monkey, dragon).
3. At the end of the rainbow, there is . . . .
4. How does it feel to be . . . ?
5. The day my pet learned to talk.
6. The day a . . . followed me home from school.
7. What in the world!
8. The day the President came to my house.
9. The magic birthday cake.
10. Pretend to be an inanimate object. Write how this might feel. (Examples: doughnut, flag, wind, apple, leaf.)
11. What would happen if there were no wood in the world? (Brainstorm.)
12. Everyone always told the truth.
13. We had only three fingers. (Some taped their fingers together.)
14. Pills were developed as a substitute for food (no restaurants but a chain of pill parlors).
15. If clouds had strings attached to them. (What would happen?)
16. Write a story on the following topic: What I would do if I knew I would be blind in three days.
17. What is a Zouch? (Obviously there is no such thing; experiment with the idea. Have the children write about it.)
18. Riding my polka-dotted butterfly.
19. Santa couldn't make it.
20. When the number 2 came alive.

21. Gleeple zapsnorp gafoodle.
22. Life on the moon.
23. Christmas on the moon.
24. The sixth continent.
25. How the zebra got his stripes.
26. How the giraffe got his long neck.
27. How sleep began.
28. It's raining cats and dogs.
29. The day the sun forgot to rise.
30. A money tree.
31. Suddenly the sun disappeared.
32. The magic door.
33. One day it rained cats and dogs.

Words as Ideas

1. Poverty.
2. Fall.
3. Bugs (ants, insects).
4. Adults.
5. Loneliness.
6. Youth.
7. Age.
8. Fire.
9. Water.
10. Teeth.
11. Animals (peacocks, etc.).
12. Gossip.
13. Sewing.
14. Dust.
15. Reincarnation.
16. Mugging.
17. Football.
18. A blizzard.
19. Outward appearance.
20. So beautiful.
21. A mouse.
22. Strange music.
23. Broken window.
24. Tempting smell.
25. Rocky shore.
26. Faithful horse.
27. Stormy sea.
28. Abandoned mine.
29. Yelling crowd.
30. High-fenced yard.
31. Smoke of a signal fire.
32. Singing arrow.
33. Mysterious box.
34. Squirrels scampering.
35. Character traits.
36. Weather notations.

37. Generation gap.
38. Man with balloons.
39. A bear in your camp.
40. A plane failing to gain altitude.
41. P.R.J. capsule X2-17.7.
42. Two-brained animals.
43. Plastic model cars.
44. Flowers turning to the sun.
45. Birds singing in the trees.
46. About my finger paints.
47. Mental images (about the five senses).
48. Things that bring out feeling (happiness, etc.).

REPORTING

Lead Questions

1. What I would like to see invented and why.
2. How many uses are there for a bottle?
3. How do poets give human feelings to inanimate objects?
4. What makes a good class?
5. What does a good teacher do?
6. What do good students do?
7. What does my name mean?
8. What is happy?
9. What makes me happy?
10. What is success?
11. What kind of friend am I?
12. What's so spooky about death?
13. What is your favorite subject?
14. Can cats be reincarnated?
15. What in the world bothers me?
16. What makes me sad?
17. What's the difference between liking and loving?
18. What does the teacher do when she's not in school?
19. Why do good guys always wear white hats?
20. What can I do to save our wildlife?
21. What are Eskimo schools like?
22. At what age do you think teen-agers should start dating?
23. What do you think is the world's biggest problem?
24. What kind of car would you like to have?
25. Have you ever been discriminated against?
26. Is discrimination ever right?
27. What do you think is the worst kind of discrimination?
28. Why hasn't a black man ever been President?
29. How I would solve the world's biggest problem.
30. What is the favorite sport of the group?
31. What singing group do you like best?
32. Which is more important, grades or clothes?
33. What qualities do you admire most in teen-agers (adults)?
34. How old would the majority of the people in your group like to be?

35. Where would you most like to travel?
36. What is the hardest part about growing up?
37. Are men or women easier to get along with?
38. Who are the most understanding teachers? Women or men?
39. How late do you think a student should be allowed to stay out on weekdays, weekends?
40. Whom do you talk to most about your problems — friends, parents, teachers, others?
41. What invention do you consider to be the most important to our civilization?

Headlines

1. Teacher's faults.
2. My trip to the museum (bakery, etc.).
3. The world outside.
4. I love the earth.
5. How dogs were domesticated.
6. My body, the wonderful human machine.
7. The meaning of friendship.
8. United States of America — the best place to live.
9. Exploring outer space.
10. U.S. aiding underdeveloped countries.
11. Going to college.
12. Community needs.
13. Lengthening the span of human life.
14. Origin of (a national holiday).
15. The family's heritage and culture.
16. Civilization from start to finish.
17. The meaning of a republican democracy.
18. The meaning of the future portrayed by clothes now.
19. The geography of my state and how it affects me.
20. Discuss the ethnographic history of the state.
21. The biggest problem in the U.S.A.
22. The educational needs of the younger generation to meet the needs of a changing world.
23. Responsibility of the student to the family, to the school, or to his community.

News

1. Write a weather report (humorous or serious).
2. Write a news report on something that has occurred in your building recently (speaker, film, sports event, etc.).
3. Write a news report on a field trip or other school activities outside the building.
4. Write about how seasonal changes and weather phenomena such as snowflakes, raindrops on a windowpane, etc., came to be.

Human Interest

1. Why I like TV.
2. What I'm thankful for.

3. Why I love horses.
4. What I want to learn in English.
5. Dating: what I think of it.
6. I like to hunt because . . . .
7. I like rainy days because . . . .
8. I like gym day because . . . .
9. I like being a girl (boy) because . . . .
10. I like reading because . . . .
11. I am glad to be an American because . . . .
12. The kind of candy I like best is . . . .
13. Here is how I would make a snowman . . . .
14. At the library, we should . . . .
15. At the circus, I like to see . . . .
16. At the zoo, the animal I like best is . . . because . . . .
17. The trouble with brothers (sisters) is . . . .
18. The trouble with teachers is . . . .
19. The team of the year I like best is . . . .
20. Why grandmothers are always nice.
21. When we are in school, we should . . . .
22. What I like (or dislike) about school.
23. A student's autobiography.
24. The advantages and disadvantages of being an only child.
25. The advantages and disadvantages of being an older brother (sister).
26. The advantages and disadvantages of being a younger brother (sister).
27. Why I admire G. W. Carver (can be used in study of any grade—with different heroes).
28. What determined the selection of the name of your school.
29. List five things the majority of your group would do with a million dollars.
30. Ways to make money (wash cars, mow lawns, have a circus, make colored-sand "rainbow" bottles).
31. What I'm not thankful for on Thanksgiving.
32. Who started the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas time?
33. The need for peace.
34. Needs and wants for Christmas.

MISCELLANEOUS

Language Fun

1. Do a parody of a familiar poem.
2. Make up riddles about occupations (also jokes, etc.).
3. Make a three-sentenced spelling story.
4. Write a paragraph on future occupation (stressing sentence structure, punctuation, etc.).
5. Write a thank-you note without using the words "thank you."
6. Write a story or state an argument based on the lyrics of a popular song picked by you.

Puzzles

1. Why do we eat?
2. What does a smile mean?
3. Why does a baby laugh?
4. What is laughter?
5. Where is yesterday?
6. Why does rain fall?
7. Where did the fog go?
8. Where do animals go when the snow falls?
9. How is a bottle of glue like a fire alarm?
10. What would happen if people forgot how to cry?

MOTIVATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Using Words

1. List adjectives found in a story or poem. Then use in own story, poem, or picture.
2. List on a piece of paper all the uses you can think of for a brick — (five minutes).
3. Make up a story using all the spelling words you can.
4. Write your own haiku poetry about the earth.
5. The student writes a story he has read from a point of view different from that used in the original story.
6. Alliteration. Write a story with as many words as possible starting with the same letter or sound, i.e., "The daring dog darted down the driveway into the dark and dreadful subway."
7. Discuss trite similes (as bright as a silver dollar). Encourage children to create new space-age similes. "The lad was as bright as a lasar beam" — use this as a story title to describe all the bright actions that justify use of this title.
8. Technique. Read and study a poem. Discuss prose and figurative language — specifically similes.
9. Discuss similes, conversation, and alliteration. Write a story about an animal using similes, alliteration, and conversation.
10. List gobbledegook for farmers, doctors, etc. Then write a farm story using the language of farmers. Do the same for other occupational and professional groups.
11. Original poems. Do after a study of rhyming words, punctuation, and style of simple poems (especially about holidays or seasons).
12. Limericks, five lines, rhyme scheme: a,a,b,b,a.
    I wish that my room had a floor;
    I don't care so much for a door,
    But this walking around
    Without touching the ground
    Is getting to be quite a bore.
13. One teacher's most successful writing lesson sprang from the introduction of the adjective. We talked about the adjective as that part of speech which helps to paint a picture with

words — the kinds of words which usually help us to see, feel, hear, smell, or taste more precisely.

14. Take an unknown word, define it any way you like, and write a story using that word. For fun, look up the word before reading the paragraphs to the class.
15. (a) Pair words that have similar meanings such as groundhog and woodchuck, store and shop. Compile a varied list and the student then selects his own "partner words" and writes about his own experiences. If the lesson is to be structured further, the teacher may ask the differences within the "partner words," such as artist and illustrator, company and visitors. (b) "If I Ran the Class for a Day" can provide the student with an opportunity to give vent to his emotions. Some of his writing should include his reasons for assigning homework or punishing the class, for example. Some interesting insights into the student can be gained this way. (c) Concepts of big and small, high and low, fat and skinny should be thought of in terms of comparison. The class can compile a list of nouns that are different sizes. When the writing begins, comparisons are drawn with the objects listed. Example, "I saw a slide that was as tall as an elephant. The elephant is fatter though!"
16. Personification. Have children bring in the picture of an object and then pretend he is one of the objects. You might have such topics as: "The Mirror and Things," "Best Dress in the Closet," "What My Shoelace Thinks of Me," "Hats I Have Known." Or use objects that are closely associated with famous persons and write about them in the first person: "I Was Queen Isabella's Jewel Case" or "What It Was Like to Be Abe Lincoln's Ax." Two children can create a dialogue between inanimate objects that have been onlookers at some exciting or dramatic event — the quill pen and the sand shaker that witnessed and participated in the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower and Plymouth Rock, Winston Churchill's hat and cane.

Using Literature

1. (a) Read a folk tale which explains how something came to be. Then have the children write their own explanation of how something came about. Showing a film is good also. (b) Read a conversation from a story or a play. Have the students write a story around the conversation. (c) Read or view a tall tale. Discuss what makes a tale tall. Have the students write their own tall tale.
2. Read a myth to class (sixth grade). Discuss why it is a myth. Have class write myths, e.g., why pigs have curly tails, why rabbits hop, etc.
3. After reading folk tales and fables, the children could create an imaginative story using the literature as a guide.
4. Read an exciting short story to the class. Just before reaching the climax, stop and ask them to write their own endings for the story.

5. Have the children choose one person from their literature or from real life whom they would like to be.
6. After the class has read a story, pupils could write about one particular character and how they felt about that character.
7. Read the first part of a story — such as the setting — and have the students write the action, climax, anticlimax, etc.
8. Complete this story: The night was still, broken only by the shrill screeches of a distant owl. The black, narrow house looked forbidding in the pale moonlight. The leaves which were still on the trees made rustling sounds as a faint breeze blew them . . . .
9. The beginning of a story is given in which an old and faithful sled overhears his owner telling, with glee, that he is getting a new sled for Christmas. The sled is telling how he feels about this. The unfinished story, dramatically told, stops after a remark such as "but on Christmas morning" . . . .
10. In reading, children read to a certain point and then finish on their own. A day later, after reading the conclusion, they compare and contrast similarities and differences in two endings.
11. Use Charlie Brown books — *Love Is . . .* or *A Friend Is . . . .* Show parts of the book on the opaque projector. Let children write their interpretation of what love is or what a friend is. Have children illustrate their stories. Show pictures and share feelings with others in the class.
12. Read "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton and have the children discuss it and write possible endings to it.
13. From Ruth Krauss' book, *How to Make an Earthquake,* one teacher came up with several ideas she used during her student teaching experience. For motivation, she read several passages and then posed one of the questions in the book. She put this topic on a ditto, drew a picture to coincide with the topic (for the children to color at their option in case they finished earlier) and left ample space for writing. (a) "How to Balance a Peanut on Your Nose," (b) "The Best Way to Eat Peas," and (c) "How to Make 'Mish-Mosh'."
14. Read chapters from *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* by Betty McDonald to the children. (Each chapter tells how Mrs. Piggle Wiggle cures some bad habit of the children in the neighorhood.) Have children write a Mrs. Piggle Wiggle story telling how this quaint lady might solve one of their personal problems.
15. "I Was Freed by Harriett Tubman." This assignment followed the reading of *Freedom Train* by Dorothy Sterling which gives the account of the runaway slave who became a Moses to her people. The book was read orally to the class.
16. John F. Kennedy. Since Vachel Lindsay's birthday and the anniversary of Kennedy's death are so close, one class studied Lindsay's poem "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." Then the children wrote analogies about John F. Kennedy. A fringe benefit was learning the term "analogy."
17. The most successful writing assignment of one class came after reading "Finding My Way" by Gorghild Dahl, one of the

selections in the Gateway Series. This story deals with the experiences of a person who has gone blind.

18. Having read Fabre's *Selections in Science,* have the children explain the good and bad points of a germ-free world.
19. Reading. After reading a pirate story, each child pretends to be a mouse hiding in a pirate ship or a fair maiden captured by the pirates; they write their observations of the actions of pirates. Robert Lawson, *Captain Kidd's Cat;* Stevenson, *Treasure Island;* Howard Pyle, *Book of Pirates.*
20. Discuss Greek gods. Talk about the most famous ones. Show pictures in Encyclopaedia Britannica Jr. Read *The Boy Who Flew Too Close to the Sun.*
21. The play *Mr. Vinegar* in a language text (Harcourt, Brace). Rehearse and perform the play for other rooms. Suggest to the children that they write a play of their own (choose imaginative children).
22. "A Favorite Book." Have the pupils write a book report in one hundred words or less, stating time, place, characters, and plot.

Games

1. Write a round-robin story in which each child in turn adds a new sentence to the story.
2. Put an appropriate word in the blank: If we . . . coated a pencil, it would be very effective for pencil chewers. Tell why.
3. One teacher has a theme that has been quite successful — "My Original Holiday." The child makes up a holiday, chooses a specific date for his holiday, and describes what the day consists of, historic background, and means of celebration.
4. Put three objects in a title that are not normally connected, such as "The Lion, the Rose, and the Star"; "The Feather, the Clock, and the Doughnut." Or, put three objects in a box, such as an aspirin, nail, and a key, and ask the class to write themes using all three in some way. Take two story characters from different stories and use them in the same story. Example: Amos from *Ben and Me* and *Stuart Little.*
5. Have the students choose an object. They are to write a story as told by this object as to how it came to exist in its present state or surroundings. Explain to the students that the best composition will be that one whose story is most original. Compositions will be scored according to the unusual circumstances in which the objects act or are placed by the author. The compositions will be read to the class and this audience will count up the unusual circumstances found in the writing.
6. Ask the class to suggest twelve or fifteen words at random. Write these on the board, and from this list the class tries to make up sentences (a means to stimulate the children's imaginations). For example, they suggest the words: cave, robbers, loot, train, detectives. Using these words they make up several sentences such as: (a) The train robbers hid their

loot in a cave. (b) The loot from the train robbery was worth several thousand dollars. From here they go on to write a paragraph or two. Write modern versions of stories they have read in class, making characters, settings, and situations similar to the ones in the original story. Sometimes the teacher will write a topic sentence on the board such as: It was a dark and stormy . . . .

7. Provide beginning of story and ending sentence of story and ask them to fill the middle.
8. Have pupils close their eyes and imagine what a "grinch" would look like. Is it an animal or something from outer space? Allow them thinking time before writing a theme entitled "The Day I Bumped into the Grinch." As a follow-up activity, ask them to draw a picture about their story. This is a great activity — kids enjoy it and the results are amazing.
9. English story ideas (used in top English group). Very successful; the children love the activity and are very creative. A word (the more unusual and fun-sounding the better) is given to the children. It is not defined or discussed. The child can be as creative and imaginative as he can be — no penalty for a wrong definition; in fact, they are encouraged to invent definitions! After the stories are written and read to the group, the actual definition is discussed. It is fun to see how different the definitions are, and the teacher thinks the real definitions will be remembered with more clarity because of the "way out" definitions. The lesson that followed the activity was much better received because of the fun they had with the word. (Polygraph was used as a starter word. The lesson which followed stressed the use of the prefix *poly* and the children discussed other words containing this same prefix: polygon, polyhedron, polygamy, etc.)
10. The game, I Pack My Trunk (and in it I put). Then, instead of putting things in a trunk, put together a story. Start it out for the children; have each child add an idea.
11. One teacher chose six titles for creative stories and put them in envelopes. The children were divided into six groups so that each group would work together on one title. Every child was given a piece of writing paper and drawing paper. She gave the envelopes to one of the children in each group — at the sound of "go" they opened them and read the title; the first person wrote for five minutes, then passed it to the next person, who read it and added on to it for five minutes and then it was passed until all children had helped compose the story. In the meantime the children who were not writing were drawing illustrations. At the end the children put their "book" together and presented it to the class.
12. Then they progress to pictures. The teacher cuts out several assorted pictures from magazines. The class discusses appropriate titles for the pictures and tries to think about a story for each one. I like to give each child a different picture, so there will be no repetition of the story line as in the previous attempts at writing.

13. At Thanksgiving time, use the alphabet for children to list things for which they are grateful, i.e.: (a) airplanes, the alphabet; (b) books, baskets; (c) churches, candy.

Bulletin Board

1. Students were asked to share their views with the class. After reading a short story, they were directed to make creative posters using words instead of pictures to convey their feelings in relationship to the story that they read. Students judged the posters and prizes were awarded to the three best posters.
2. Develop a story from a picture displayed on the bulletin board. (The teacher will post two or three from which to select.)
3. (a) On the Trail of Good Stories — cut an Indian figure and footprints from construction paper. Have the Indian follow footprints to the stories, each mounted on construction paper along the trail. (b) Stories with the Seal of Approval — draw several seals balancing balls on their noses; mount stories on balls. (c) Drum up Good Stories — e.g., revolutionary drummer boy. (d) Stories that Pass Inspection — cut out a soldier and several soldier hats; mount stories on hats.

Props

1. Have children bring three real objects to school in a paper bag They can trade paper bags and create stories around the objects found inside.
2. The Box of Feels. Blindfolded, the child selects one of the articles from the box (e.g., Halloween mask with eye holes covered). Change the articles frequently.
3. Wrap up, individually, articles such as a penny, a piece of velvet, a string, etc., and have the child choose a package and write about how he would feel if he were that object.
4. Choose one of the two or three pictures displayed on the bulletin board and describe what you see in it.
5. Have each child bring an object to class and have him write a story using the object as the central idea.
6. Some methods one teacher used to inspire creative writing are: (a) a mysterious sound inside an unusual shaped box, (b) a gift-wrapped box, (c) a portion of an interesting picture taken from a magazine, (d) a stuffed animal, (e) stuffed giraffe (describe how it got its spots or its long neck), (f) a mouse and an elephant (how does one view the other), (g) start a mystery story and stop just when the action begins, (h) children sit in circle with eyes closed, pass a tray with different textured objects or food, then describe how it feels, (i) discuss with children what "turns them on"; then write about what "turns them off."
7. Show different kinds of bubble gum (bought in a store). Have motivating discussion with the children giving their peculiar incidents with bubble gum. Have children write an imaginary story of: "How Bubble Gum Saved Me from . . . ."

8. Show an art picture to the class. Portraits of people by famous artists can be used. Have the children write a paragraph about the kind of person they think the person may have been. What can they see in the face that may give them clues to his personality?
9. How many uses can you find for a bottle?
10. Notebook hole reinforcements. Children were provided with several of the reinforcements to incorporate into a picture and then write a story about it. Results included race cars, trains, the galaxy, rockets, animal eyes.
11. Live pets. Observe a given pet and then have the children write about it and draw it.
12. Show a picture of an animal. (If he could talk, what would he say to me?)
13. Show a picture, but cover up most of it allowing only an unusual part to show, i.e., pizza, etc. Describe what you think this is.
14. Show a picture of some object or even the object itself. Have the students write a theme of imagination about it as they might each see it.
15. Use mirrors to observe themselves. Then describe or write what they see.

Projects

1. Scarecrow thoughts. Pupil committee builds a three-dimensional scarecrow in the room or constructs one on the board of real straw. Pupils write why they would or would not want to be a scarecrow.
2. Thoughts of a castle. A very large picture of a forbidding castle on the board around Halloween with questions such as: (a) What has gone on within the walls? (b) What does it think about its age? (c) What happened one Halloween night? (d) How does it feel compared to new, modern buildings?
3. Write a book for first graders with a controlled vocabulary.
4. Have upper-grade children write a primer for primary children to read. If it can be arranged, have the author work with his pupil in reading the story.
5. Have the children construct papier-mache animals and paint them in colorful polka dots and other interesting designs. Have the children make up unusual names and print name tags. Display the tagged animals on a table. Have children select two or three of the animals as characters for an original story.
6. After going to a bakery, have the children write (and possibly draw, too) about their experiences.
7. Shapes. Children were given precut construction paper in an abstract shape. The child made his own picture from the shape and told a story to go with it. Results included mushroom with elf under it, horse's head, lady's hat, clown's collar.
8. Have children write their own story and illustrate it using adding machine tape. They draw a progression of pictures, showing

successive action, then write their own captions. They do not have to be funny like regular comics even though they appear to be comics.

9. Take a field trip around the school yard. Upon returning, ask the children to describe something they each saw that they think no one else did.
10. Ask children to keep a diary for a week as if it were written by a person their age as they traveled in the early 1800s from the East to Illinois (or any other state).
11. Have the children keep an imaginary diary for a week. They are to use their imaginations and write about out-of-the-ordinary events while making them sound like usual happenings.
12. Ask the pupils to illustrate and write a story about their favorite Mother Goose tale, i.e., Three Bears, Three Little Pigs, etc. The material is familiar and they do not feel put upon to "make up" something they do not know about.
13. Observe family members. Write about each, including habits, interests, likes, dislikes. Make a family album.
14. Have each child draw three random lines in colored crayon on the upper part of a sheet of paper. Exchange. Using these lines, finish a picture. Write a story remembering: (a) something must happen, (b) it must happen in sequence, (c) it should have a punch line.
15. An original book of at least three chapters; exercize in carrying a theme throughout an extended period; illustrated in water colors; bound with thread, cardboard, and fabric. The students have the option to donate their completed, permanently bound book to the library (good incentive). Introduce and discuss introduction of characters, plot, crisis, and resolution.
16. When someone is ill in the group, a letter to cheer them up from each member is good. You may have them say things that are outlandish that might get a laugh from the person that is ill. The letters need not be read and corrected by the teacher. The children should be told before they write whether or not the teacher will read them.
17. Have a contest to see who can write the scariest ghost story. Discuss words that make a scary story. Write them on blackboard. Read a scary story to children (e.g., "The Pit and the Pendulum"). After the stories are written, they can be either acted out or read orally (with dramatic expression). Discuss what makes a story scary. Does the age of the reader affect the scariness of the story? What type of stories do young children like? Older children? Teen-agers? Adults?
18. Ask children about their favorite colors, why they like them, and what they remind them of. Then once motivated, have the children write about this color, draw a picture of something representative of the color, and mount it on a piece of paper that color.
19. Give students facsimile bus, railroad, or plane tickets. Have them print their destination on them — then write what they see from the window of the bus, railroad, or plane window.
20. Make a rebus. This is best as a group activity the first time.

At the end of the day give each child about eight feet of soft wire that can be easily bent and easily cut. Ask the children to use the wire to make a useful object that no one has ever made before and to bring this object to class the following day. Have the children do one of the following: (a) The following day have each child write a paragraph describing a machine that could be used to mass-produce his invention. Drawings and diagrams should be used to help describe this machine. (b) The following day have each child imagine that his invention is to be put on the market. Ask him to describe his invention and write the instructions that would have to go in the box. (c) Write an ad for his invention.

21. Separate projects. Have them write their own words to pictures. They should not be related to what is written underneath. (a) As an extension of this, students can write their own words to a favorite comic book. They can use all or part of the comic book. (b) Write a short story on long, thin strips of paper. Then roll them on a tape dispenser and unravel the story as it is read (should be something short). (c) Have lots of magazines in the room, along with glue, colored paper, and other miscellaneous items. The pupils cut out interesting pictures and can do what they want, such as: (1) Place cutout on paper and draw a picture that makes cutout part of the picture. (2) Make a story booklet, using pictures from a magazine, rather than a drawing. (3) Put a picture at the beginning of a booklet and write a story of any length about the picture. (d) Make a folder about one single subject. Cut out pictures from magazines relating to the subject such as toys, girls, etc., and then write something at the completion of the folder.

Projection

1. "I Am a Snowflake." The topic would be discussed and in some cases the teacher may give the beginning sentence. Discuss rain, snow, etc. Give a sentence to start: "I fell asleep in a fluffy white cloud." "As a splishy, splashy raindrop, I had a good time." "Now I feel a change." Then write on the beginning of a snowflake and a trip to earth.
2. Pretend that you are hiding in a tree along the street watching a number of boys and girls go down the street. From your high vantage point, take the sentence, "The boy or girl went home," and see dozens of different boys and girls as they go home. Write about these boys or girls. Some of these phrases may suggest a story: cows standing in the shade; mirror like the surface of the sea; high, terrifying scream; bees buzzing about the garden; turtles stretched out in the sun; strange, unusual footprints.
3. (a) Pretend you are an astronaut engineer. The moon (or a planet) has been discovered. You are to plan a city (or observatory). What things must you consider? What materials will

you use? (b) You are the President. It is up to you to decide the future of our country's peace. How will you stop the war in Vietnam? (c) There is a horrible flood resulting from a hurricane off the coast of Florida (or wherever). You have a chance to be saved in a rescue lifeboat, but the officer tells you that you can take only one thing with you and you must decide instantly. What would you take along? Why? (Vary it and say you can only take one pet and you have several.) (d) If you could design a home of any kind . . . .

4. Write anything about a chair that you can think of — poem or story form (i.e., if a chair could talk; chair of the future, etc.).
5. There is a little elf sitting on our windowsill. Where did he come from? Where is he going? Why did he stop here? How is he dressed?
6. Pretend you are an ant. How does everything around you look from your vantage point?
7. Pretend you are an adventure storybook on a shelf in the library. No one ever draws you out. How do you feel?
8. "If You Were Ten Inches Tall" or "If You Were Ten Feet Tall." Motivation started with measuring to ten feet on the wall and ten inches on a ruler and trying to "think" ourselves those sizes. Tremendous athletes evolved, spies secreted themselves on planes and solved world problems, mouse-like homes were fantasized, etc. One class painted an actual ten-foot tall man and ten-inch man to display with their writings.
9. "A Trip Through the Mind of a . . . Grade Boy (Girl)." Boys write about what girls think about and girls write about what is in a boy's mind.
10. Try to think what would happen if: sleep was unnecessary, everyone was satisfied with things as they are, we never had to make decisions, all printing presses were destroyed, you lived on a planet with ten times as much gravity.

Discussion

1. The children could be motivated to write about something that bothers them, their pet peeve.
2. On the first autumn-like day, have the children talk about and write about their favorite aspects of the fall.
3. Give the children the topic, "I Am Not Me Today." They can be another person or an object. They are to tell about their life as another person or object.
4. On a rainy day talk about and have the children write about what the rain reminds them of.
5. During a space shot have the children write about what they would do if they were alone on the particular planet that we were aiming for.
6. On the first winter day, have the children talk about and write about their favorite winter sport.
7. After something out of the ordinary happens in your classroom, ask the children to write a factual report of what happened.

Reading them aloud will demonstrate how differently people view the same event.

8. For Halloween begin a short story with four or five sentences and have the children finish it. One use is going to a haunted house while trick or treating and have the children write about what happens.
9. What does it mean to be "lost" in books, in TV? Invite children to tell of their experiences — happy, sad, excited, frightened.
10. Put a large symbol, such as an L, an X, or a circle, on the board. Discuss what it makes each child think of. Then ask the children to think of some other thing from the symbol that nobody else will think of, and to write about it.
11. Discuss games played during recess. Lead in to the time of the year. Go to the window and point up the beauty (or not) of the day.
12. Have pupils discuss occupations of parents and other adults; list occupations on blackboard.
13. For winter — begin by asking children how they would feel if they were nothing — zero — then show a snowman and talk about it. Have them write how they would feel if they were at first nothing then slowly became a snowman, and how they would feel as they were melting. (These stories came out very clear, worked well.)
14. Discuss briefly with the students the aim of expository writing and how it differs from description and narration. Expository writing answers such questions as "How?" "Why?" and "How do you know?" Present the following ideas to the students and have them choose the one they wish to write about: (a) Imagine you are Sherlock Holmes and you have received a threatening letter while working on a murder case. Write a paragraph telling why you might have received this letter. (b) Imagine the U.S. map was at the North Pole, or at the Equator. What major changes would take place? Explain. (c) Imagine that Robin Hood lived in the year 2000 AD. Explain some of the unusual circumstances with which he would be faced.
15. Ask the class this question, "Should all books be replaced by something?" When students state their opinion, "Why?" may be asked. Present these questions to the students: (a) Should houses be made completely of glass? (b) Should pianos talk? (c) Should squares be round? (d) Should horses be tiny as poodles? (e) Should the earth be flat? The students may choose any one of these for their composition. The students are then asked to vote pro or con on all issues except the one they have chosen to write about. Keep a record of this vote. After all compositions have been read to the class, another vote should be taken to see how convincing their writing was.
16. (a) Encourage students to think in terms of various senses — sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste. Select specific objects (a shovel, for example); each person lists words describing the object visually — blue, fuzzy, thick, etc. Then touch — soft, smooth, warm, etc. Do for all senses (good for descriptive word

development). Ideas for objects to describe: flower, tree, classroom, boy, box, table, spaghetti. (b) List senses in order of importance to you. What would be the disadvantages if you did not have a particular sense? What advantages (as the sound of a dentist's drill)? Discuss pleasure sensations. (c) Have class write short descriptions of sense experiences they remember as having the strongest impact on them: "The Most Amazing Sight . . ."; "The Most Beautiful Sound . . ."; "The Most Terrifying Touch . . ."; "The Most Potent Smell I Ever Experienced."

17. The use of the senses: (a) the smell of things — perfume, paste, old books, earth; (b) the taste of things — toothpaste, jelly; (c) the sound of things — biting into an apple, the buzz of the saw. Describe one of the following so vividly that a visitor from another planet could recognize it at once: a tomato, ice cream, shoelace, piece of toast, doorknob, bottle of ink, book cover, orange squeezer, baseball, pencil.

Using Media

1. Watch a TV program and analyze it.
2. Current happenings. Watch spaceflight, have children write about their feelings if they were the spaceship.
3. During a space shot, have the children write about what they would do if they were alone on the particular heavenly body that we were aiming for.
4. When talking about people in the news, have the children write about a person they would like to be.
5. Bring in newspaper cartoons and caricatures of the President. Discuss the definition of caricature.
6. Dog stories. Choose a magazine picture of a dog. The title is "Dog for Sale." Write about trying to persuade your family into buying him, or if he is already yours, about talking them into *not* selling him.
7. To stimulate imaginative thinking one teacher successfully used advertisements, usually in color, to suggest original written works. The item is cut out so that no lettering appears on the picture which is pasted on tagboard. All of the tagboards are nine inches by twelve inches regardless of the size of the picture, with more items than there are class members. The advertisements used have been from all sources.
8. Put pictures of several famous people on the bulletin board. Ask students to choose the picture of one person and describe it so that when their story is read to the class, their peers can identify which person is being described from the story written.
9. (a) Find pictures in magazines. These may be pictures of a person, a group of people, a situation, a happening. (b) Mount each picture (best to have fairly large pictures) on a sheet of twelve-inch by eighteen-inch construction paper, leaving space at the side or bottom. (c) Using a felt-tip marker, print a provocative comment or question beside or beneath the picture. Examples: (1) Why might this person be angry?

Is his anger justified? (2) What is wrong here? (3) The man in the center is causing others to react. In what way? (d) Very often this exercise may result in one good paragraph. (e) Pictures may be exchanged to produce varied reactions to pictures. (f) Depending upon the pictures selected, as well as the printed comments, some writings may be several paragraphs in length.

10. The student will either write a story or state an argument based on the lyrics of a popular song picked by the student.
11. What story do you think of when you hear this music?
12. Play a record. Ask children to write the images the music evoked.
13. After hearing a particular piece of music, have the children draw about whatever the music makes them think of. (There are many pieces that would lead to creative writing.)
14. Use the record, *1812 Overture,* by Tchaikovsky. Ask the children to listen to the last part of the record (battle scene). As they listen, they should write down phrases that come to mind from the music. Play the music two or three times. Ask children to combine their thoughts into one story. Discuss the important elements of a story (place, time, action, characters, etc.). After the stories have been corrected, have volunteers read their stories.
15. Play the record, "Wind Is a Cat." Have them close their eyes and sway to the wind or interpret the wind in pantomime as the record plays. Discuss: metaphor, simile, and figurative language.
16. Mystery or Ghost Story. For Halloween week: a record with eerie voices, sounds, effects, etc., played while the pupils write. Sixth-graders enjoy horror and utilize every gory idea they can.
17. Show a short movie of a story usually shown to lower or primary grades, but do *not* turn on the sound ("Ugly Duckling," "Skipper Learns a Lesson," "Corky the Crow," "Adventures of a Young Eagle"). Ask pupils to write the story of the movie. The stories turn out to be surprisingly different from each other. This is even more effective if a film such as, *Our Wonderful Body: How It Moves,* is shown. These stories will turn out to be quite hilarious. "I'm No Fool with a Bicycle" is an excellent writing on a teaching film.

WRITING TABLE

Using Your Imagination

1. Notebook hole reinforcements. Children are provided with several of the reinforcements to incorporate into a picture; they then write a story about it. Results have included race cars, trains, the galaxy, rockets, animal eyes.
2. Shapes. Children are given precut construction paper in an abstract shape. The child makes his own picture from the shape and tells a story to go with it. Results have included a mush-

room with an elf under it, a horse's head, a lady's hat, a clown's collar.

3. Secure book jackets from the library. Children write their own "books" using available information.
4. Select a picture from the picture file and write a story about the picture.
5. Invent a story or fairy tale based on a magazine picture.
6. Dog stories. Choose a magazine picture of a dog. The title is "Dog for Sale." Write about trying to persuade your family into buying him, or if he is already yours, about talking them into *not* selling him.
7. Wrap up, individually, articles such as a penny, a piece of velvet, a string, etc., and have the child choose a package and write about how he would feel if he were that object.
8. Thoughts of a castle. Put a very large picture of a forbidding castle on the board around Halloween with questions such as: (a) What has gone on within the walls? (b) What does it think about its age? (c) What happened one Halloween night? (d) How does it feel compared to new, modern buildings?
9. One teacher has three or four sets of wordless pictures gleaned from advertisements put out by book companies for beginning primary grades. (You have to scrounge two copies for each set.) These she has pasted on colored construction paper in such a way that they form a sequence of events — much like a cartoon strip without words. Thus, the plot of a story evolves through pictures. Have a pupil write the story told by the pictures. Either description or conversation might be stressed.
10. Magazine pictures can be used as a source for exciting characters and settings. Let children look through magazines for pictures of characters that interest them. Have them cut out the characters and superimpose them on other magazine pictures that they have chosen as settings. One may want to put a lion walking along a city street. Realistic or imaginary stories can develop from these illustrations. Interesting stories sometimes result when sizes are disproportionate. This motivational technique can be used for either oral or written stories.
11. One teacher has a large collection of pictures in what I call a picture file. From this picture file pupils select a picture. Tell them to look at the picture and study it carefully. Who is involved? What is going on in the picture? What do you think is going to happen? How will the story end? Will there be a "happy" ending?

File Fun

1. Use three-inch by five-inch cards in a file box with words on the cards to be used to germinate individual writing ideas.
2. Have the children write stories using some of these phrases that might give a lonely feeling: empty and quiet, aching heart, homeless, surrounded by stillness, steady downpour of rain, disappointed sighing, faint toot of an engine, longing for the

sight of someone, sad and anxious eyes, shut in by towering trees, lengthening purple shadows.

3. Write a story using some of these phrases that might give a gay feeling: flowers turning to the sun, wishes coming true, squirrels scampering, a shining blanket of white snow, white cottages freshly painted, a rainbow bridge in the sky, boys whistling while fishing, birds singing in the trees. Write a story using some of these phrases that might give a spooky feeling: dark mysterious shadows, round and smiling moon, branches bending and groaning, black and scary night, listening and shivering, shutters banging back and forth, sudden hooting of an owl, sighing, sobbing wind, creeping closer and closer, anxiously listening.
4. Have a card file (three inches by five inches) consisting of cards on which single paragraphs are written. These paragraphs provide the first paragraphs of stories. Tell pupils to choose a card and write a story. Be sure that the plot is introduced by the paragraph and that the climax of the story comes to a logical conclusion.
5. The world in which we are living is changing very fast. Many of the things that we use today were not even thought possible twenty-five years ago. Many things that we use today will be old-fashioned twenty-five years from now. Imagine that you have a special magic power. This power makes you able to change anything you want to change in our world and the things that affect our lives. Write a story about the kind of a world that you would make. How would you change your life to make it different from the way it is now? Remember, you have the power to change *anything* about your life and the world in which you live.
6. Write a story using these three phrases: a twisted old tree, faint blue hills, tumble-down shacks.
7. Can you develop a story from one of these: (a) We never thought a stray puppy could cause so much trouble. (b) Teddy Bear sat at the table slurping his soup. (c) The rain dripped off Bump Rabbit's ears as he hopped off to school. (d) The hinge creaked behind me. (e) The old man and the girl walked slowly up the street.
8. (a) Complete the unfinished story: Into the dark cold he crawled for the third time, slowly and painfully. On he crawled to the end of the cave where the great world was lying very still. Was she really killed or was she just stunned? He wondered. Cautiously he held the torch nearer her nose. . . . (b) Complete the unfinished story: The king lay stretched in the warm sun on the east side of the cabin. At times he moaned and his legs jerked as he dreamed of rabbits racing through the tall grass. The princess eyed him from the corner, then hobbled over, squatted down, and playfully whacked the king on the nose with her wooden leg. . . .
9. Write a news report on something that has occurred in your building recently.
10. Write a news report on a field trip or other school activity outside the building.

11. Describe a person in an action illustrating courage, laziness, anger, etc.
12. Write a story describing six improvements that might be made in the ordinary snow shovel.
13. Tell a story of an animal escaping from an enemy.
14. Choose a familiar sight and tell what it makes you think of.
15. Write a story about your favorite tastes or smells.
16. Write a story in which you present six ideas which would enable our school to save money.
17. Describe a fictitious person and make the reader or listener like or dislike this person from your description.
18. Pick your favorite fictional character such as Tom Sawyer, Casey at the Bat, Caddie Woodlawn, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland, Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White, Donald Duck, etc., and write about a personal adventure with him or her.
19. Write a conversation between two characters from fiction (fairy tale characters or persons from books you have read).
20. Write the most exciting or amusing experience (imaginative or real) you may have had in the past few months.
21. Express your own ideas on some subject in which you are interested either in school or outside of school.
22. Original fable. Write a fable with two characters who speak to each other (especially good in learning correct punctuation for conversation).
23. Thanksgiving. Write how you think turkeys feel about Thanksgiving, about the turkey of the future, or about the Thanksgiving dinner of the future, i.e., year 2500.
24. "Why I Like Your Book." Letter to an author.
25. You woke up one morning and the world was all green.
26. You woke up and you were the only person anywhere in the world. What would you do?
27. Choose a familiar object and write an advertisement for it.
28. You have walked across the rocks during low tide and discovered you cannot get back to the mainland. What would you do? (Maybe you would have an adventure.)
29. Write a story about an important message you found in a bottle on the shore of the Pacific Ocean.
30. You are going to the moon to live. You are allowed to take five of your most precious possessions. What would you take? Explain.
31. You have a chance to go to the moon to live. Would you go? Why or why not? Explain your reasons.
32. You are going to the moon to live. You may take two people with you. Whom would you choose? Explain your answer.
33. Write a new ending to a story or book.
34. Invent a character, an imaginary friend.
35. Try to write a story from your reader in six sentences.
36. Keep a diary in which you relate the interesting experiences of each day and your reaction to them.
37. Make yourself a bus, railroad, or plane ticket. Print your destination on it, then write what you see from the window of the bus, railroad, or plane window.